Newspapers by ancestry
https://www.newspapers.com/image/425483817/

Downloaded on Feb 8, 2026

EARLY ED.

U.S. visitors rank shopping No. 1

And it's a steal, with greenback strong and our dollar in decline

BARGAINS

Continued from Page A1

She's among a growing number of Americans who are cashing in on their strong currency and heading north of the border to do their shopping. The Canadian dollar fell to its lowest point in two years this week, bringing it within range of its all-time record low close of 63.3 U.S. cents on Aug. 27, 1998.

Analysts say U.S. consumers are finally waking up to cross-border shopping, in reverse. And that's great news for Canada's retail sector, which is forecasting a 4- to 5-per-cent increase in holiday sales over last year.

For decades, Canadians headed south in search of bargain food, toys, bed linens and clothes. But as free trade narrowed the gap in prices on many items and the Canadian dollar continued to weaken, that trend slowed. And now it's happening in reverse, even though American shoppers say some items are still cheaper in the U.S., even after they factor in the exchange rate.

On other items, though, Americans can have a field day in Canada. Take the red-hot new toy on the market, Tekno the Robotic Puppy. The interactive plastic dog that barks, walks and blinks was recently on sale at Zellers stores in Montreal for $49.97. That's $32 U.S.

The same toy sells for $39.99 U.S. at the Toys R Us store in Burlington, Vt.

"I am having a really good time," smiled Coleman, who flew to Montreal on frequent-flyer points this week to spend U.S. Thanksgiving with her husband, who has been here for six months working as a consultant to Teleglobe.

"Back home, the big sales won't really start until next week, but here in Montreal I've seen items reduced by 50 and 60 per cent. And then there's the exchange rate," said Coleman, who estimates she dropped close to $800 Canadian in two days of shopping this week. (And she hadn't even started her Christmas shopping.)

"I do the calculations in my head, and that's almost 70 per cent off from the original ticket price. That's humungous."

Montreal retailers, especially those in the busy, hotel-studded downtown core, are reporting a steadily growing influx of U.S. customers, and not just during the traditional summer tourist season.

At the Jackpot and Cottonfield casual-sportswear boutique in Ogilvy's, sales staff say as many as one in three customers these days is an American. Even though most of them pay with credit cards, clerk Melissa Lusignan says she knows they are from out of the country because they ask for information about tax refunds. She tells of one devoted U.S. customer who comes to Montreal on business regularly and barges in, with her taxi idling outside, to do some last-minute shopping on the way to the airport.

It's worth her while. For example, a cotton T-shirt that was originally priced at $29, on sale at 70 per cent off, comes to about $5.80 in U.S. funds, Lusignan points out.

"They are looking for good quality, and they know they are getting a really advantageous price."

ADS HELPED

Klaus Ryum Larsen, manager of the Danish chain's Canadian stores, says the Montreal locale depends heavily on the 6-million-strong eastern United States market.

"It used to be that the busy season lasted from May until September and then stopped, but this year the out-of-town customers have kept on coming," Larsen said.

He credited vigorous advertising campaigns by Montreal and Quebec tourism authorities for bringing in more U.S. customers from New York City, Boston, Philadelphia, upstate New York and Vermont. Tourisme Montréal, for example, recently took out ads in more than a dozen major U.S. newspapers promoting "Sweet Deals à la Montreal."

"Montreal – notorious for drop-dead boutiques – simply screams 'Christmas shopping frenzy,' " reads the full-page ad paid for by Montreal's tourist and convention bureau. The weekend getaway package offers an extra night in one of nine participating downtown hotels and a few other giveaways.

And once they are here, there's nothing Americans love more than shopping, said Pierre Belrose, vice-president of Tourisme Montréal. It's the No. 1 activity that visitors mention in questionnaires on what they love about Montreal, he said.

At the Ogilvy's garden boutique Dig This, store manager Carol Adamakos says her U.S. customers often get better deals than she herself gets when she buys wholesale.

"It's a joke what they pay when things are on sale," said Adamakos, citing a concrete planter with bas relief flowers that retails for $72.95 but is on sale this week for $43.75 – about $28 U.S.

"They pack them up and we load them in their cars if they're driving, or we ship it to them," she said. "They love coming here."

Mike McMullen, chief inspector at the U.S. Customs Service border crossing at Champlain, N.Y., has noted an increase in U.S. residents from border towns crossing over to the Canadian side to buy building supplies, furniture and household goods, as well as clothes and other items. It's been a steady phenomenon over the past year or two, he said, fueled by regular advertising by Montreal and South Shore retailers in newspapers in Plattsburgh and other areas in northern New York State and Vermont.

American residents returning to the United States after 48 hours or more are entitled to an over-all $400 exemption. But McMullen said there's no limit on the amount of Canadian-made goods they can bring back with them under the North American Free Trade Agreement.

MAPLE LEAF
INFORMATION FOR VISITORS ABOUT TAX REFUNDS
WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR A TAX REFUND?
WHAT
WHAT IS ELIGIBLE FOR A REFUND?

TED CHURCH, GAZETTE

Carol Coleman goes to the Maple Leaf tax-refund office in the Eaton Centre. As a non-Canadian, she can get back the GST she paid.

Central Florida native Jeff Rohrbaugh, his wife, Jean, and their teenage daughter Amy are at Mont-Tremblant this weekend on a ski vacation. But on their first trip to Quebec, they spent a few days in Montreal shopping for Christmas presents before heading for the ski hills. And they were dazzled by the sheer number of shoe stores downtown, their jaws dropping once they factored in the exchange rate. Jean got a pair of leather shoes for $30, which is $19 U.S., and Amy a pair of ski boots for $40, which converts to $26 U.S.

Within a few hours, Jeff had earmarked a list of stores they would revisit on the return trip home.

"We are amazed at the prices, especially on woolens and shoes," Rohrbaugh said.

"It's difficult to go through the conversions in your head, but everything looks like a terrific bargain. We hadn't expected this."

Several tax-refund offices that have sprung up around Montreal in the past few years have been doing brisk business lately.

The Maple Leaf refund outlet at the Eaton Centre is expecting to deal with more than 3,000 foreign visitors next month – about 800 of them Americans, the rest from Europe and Asia. The Vancouver-based agency offers immediate cash refunds of the 7-per-cent GST on goods, and GST and provincial-sales-tax refunds totaling 15 per cent on hotel accommodations. (Goods, too, used to be eligible for refunds of the 8-per-cent PST, but that refund was eliminated by the provincial government as of Oct. 1.)

The outlet makes its money by charging an 18-per-cent service charge on the refunded amount. It is planning another outlet at Dorval airport.

AWARENESS GROWING

U.S. shoppers "buy mostly cosmetics, clothes and electronics. And a lot of jewelry. And they love brand names," observed Eugenia Coutras, who works at another tax-refund service, at Ogilvy's. She and colleague Janice Zako say many of the U.S. shoppers they see are business travelers or people visiting relatives who squeeze in a little shopping. Others are motorists who drive up from Vermont or upstate New York for the day specifically to shop.

Catherine Swift, president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, which represents more than 100,000 small and medium-size businesses, says U.S. consumers are only just beginning to tune in to Canada as a shopping destination, even though the Canadian dollar has been declining in value for a quarter of a century.

"Awareness of Canada among Americans has been growing as they began coming here for vacations and then returning when they realized the value they got for their money," Swift said in a telephone interview.

"They like the novelty and availability of items that they don't see back home."

But the boon to Canadian retailers and exporters comes at a price, Swift warned. The weak Canadian dollar has made many imported goods more expensive for Canadian consumers and represents a declining standard of living for Canadians, she said.

Company seeks replacement for Laliberté

JITEC

Continued from Page A1

The QSC said that Jitec's founder and largest shareholder had engaged in heavy trading through at least seven brokerage accounts with the goal of boosting the company's share price. The commission also said he had transferred more than 8 million Jitec shares to 35 individuals or companies.

Jitec founder Laliberté says he'll contest QSC charges.

The day the trading ban was imposed, Nov. 10, Laliberté stepped down from the computer-network company temporarily and promised to contest the QSC allegations against him. A hearing is scheduled for Dec. 1.

Yesterday, Jitec said it's looking for a permanent replacement for Laliberté, 28, after he quit his positions as president, CEO and director.

Laliberté defended himself in a statement, saying the transactions described in the Jitec statement were for the benefit of the company.

"I would like to state that the transactions mentioned in Jitec's press release were never made for my personal gain," he said.

"On the contrary, these dealings were only conducted in the best interests of Jitec and its shareholders. The situation will be sorted out as soon as possible."

Jitec's statement also delivered bad news about two deals Jitec announced with much fanfare in September.

It said an independent committee of the board is reviewing the status of a $40-million "proposed contract" with an unnamed U.S. telecommunications consortium.

"At this stage, there is no guarantee that such an agreement will be signed," the statement said.

And the company said there has been no progress on implementing a contract signed with Canada Payphone Corp. to deliver 45,000 computer terminals for use in hotels.

Jitec shares sank 22 cents to $1.16 in trading on the Montreal Exchange yesterday. The stock hit a high of $11.65 in early August.

Jitec's statement said the company has sufficient resources to sustain its current operations.

The independent committee of the board was struck on Oct. 18 to protect the interests of minority shareholders. The chairman of the committee is Paul Massicotte, president of real-estate firm Alexis Nihon Group.

An assistant to Massicotte referred a telephone call to Michel Brown, Jitec's vice-president (operations), who is acting as president until a replacement for Laliberté is found.

Brown did not return several telephone messages left for him at Jitec's headquarters.

The company's statement quotes from a report prepared by PriceWaterhouseCoopers, an accounting firm the board asked to evaluate Jitec's technology, product status and marketing and sales infrastructure.

The board said it was encouraged by the report, which found Jitec's product "clever ... comprehensive, easily described and extensible," according to the press statement.

The company didn't make the report public.

Laliberté, who took to riding a private helicopter when Jitec's stock was riding high, owns 39 million shares, or about 62 per cent of the outstanding stock.

In imposing its trading ban, the commission said Laliberté had failed to report all of his trades, which involved hundreds of thousands of Jitec shares, or any of the share transfers to 35 individuals and companies.

A senior QSC official called the transactions "totally inappropriate" for the head of a public company.

The QSC's investigation into manipulation of Jitec's stock is continuing.

In a newspaper interview after the trading ban was imposed, Laliberté said his conduct was "clear as water" and boasted that his company will grow to be as big as telecommunications giant BCE Inc. within 15 years.

Jitec leases to small and medium-size companies its stripped-down computer terminals that are connected to powerful servers at centralized operation centres.

This gives firms access to software, high-speed Internet service and tech support for $49.95 a month.

Late yesterday, Jitec said it had retained National Public Relations to help manage communications.

LE TRENCH ET UN*
CATCH THE SPIRIT
CHRISTMAS 2000
SIMONS GIFT CERTIFICATE
The gift that's sure to please in any amount you choose. Always in fashion! Available in all our departments.
159.95
15.95
49.95
DOWN & FEATHER QUILTED JACKET
Comfort and warmth on the slopes and for all your outdoor activities. Ultralight jacket in nylon lined with goose down and feathers. Full-protection hood. Ecru and black or red and black. S,M,L,XL. Corduroy pant 49.95, toque 19.99
MOHAIR KNIT SCARF
An exceptional fashion value, 35% savings on this exclusive scarf in soft brushed mohair and nylon. Contrasting overcasting at either end. Black, grey, ecru, turquoise, violet, red, orange, wine.
MIRROR-TRIM JACQUARD V-NECK
A new twist on hippie chic from our collection of pure Shetland sweaters. Jacquard mirror trim provides an exotic touch to the cuffs and hem on charcoal or heathered red. S,M,L,XL,XXL. Shetland toque 7.99
FREE! Get a Simons giftbox with every Christmas purchase!
la maison simons
QUEBEC CITY PLACE STE-FOY • GALERIES DE LA CAPITALE • OLD QUEBEC, MONTREAL 977 STE-CATHERINE ST. W., SHERBROOKE CARREFOUR DE L'ESTRIE

Copyright © 2026 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.